

## WITH HIS HEROIC BLOOD

The Gallant Death of the Father of Henry W. Grady, the  
Brilliant Georgia Journalist.

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A peasant may rival a prince in the depth and sincerity of feeling, hence rank and condition do not count in the display of noble emotion. But if it lends nothing in way of pathos, it does lend a halo of dignity and reverence to the strange incident here described to know that the heart out of whose tumultuous fulness came forth the greeting, "You spared my father's life in battle," throbbed in the breast of that talented young southerner, Henry W. Grady.

His meeting was purely accidental. Neither knew of the existence of the other up to that time. Mr. Grady was in the company of General Gordon, with whom I had an appointment for the purpose of comparing notes of the battle of Fort Steadman, one of the most stirring events of the siege of Petersburg. General Gordon had commanded the Confederate force engaged in that affair. Although a very young man, he was a participant on the Federal side, I was in a position to know some of the important details which General Gordon, and, as I afterward found Mr. Grady, also was anxious to learn.

General Gordon told how he had obtained permission from his chief, General Robert E. Lee, to make a night attack upon Grant's lines near the Appomattox river, on the eastern line of Petersburg. It was one of the boldest affairs of the kind during the whole war. Gordon collected a dark and foggy night for the enterprise, and with a force of 12,000 men captured Fort Steadman and several adjoining batteries, at the first blow, making a breach half a mile in the Federal trenches and turning the guns of the Federal artillery upon their reserve camps. His attempt to capture Fort Haskell, a strong redoubt about 30 rods from Fort Steadman, failed, and failure at that point balked his whole enterprise. That failure had always been a mystery to General Gordon, and it was the one phase in the battle which I was asked to make clear.

It had been a sine qua non in his plan of action to have Fort Haskell surprised by a small party of desperate men, who were to dash through the breach at Fort Steadman on the heels of the captors of that work, pass around to the rear of Fort Haskell and enter it by a sally-port, where there was but one sentry on duty. This party of 100 men was made by their guide, and marched up to the front of Fort Haskell, instead of the rear. They were sometimes decide great affairs, and this affair was decided by an erratic timepiece. The watch of the sergeant of the night guard, in whose keeping lay the destiny of our little fort for the time being, happened to be too fast, and he had aroused the garrison by sounding reveille much before the usual hour. Consequently the Federal riflemen and artillery were alert when Gordon's storming party appeared in front of the fort and came in contact with the pickets, who were repulsed with great slaughter. The fate of that first storming party was a mystery which General Gordon wished to have explained. Many other interesting points of the battle were talked over. Mr. Grady being a most attentive listener, much to my sur-

prise, for at that time—it was in the '70s—young men of his age were not attracted by war stories.

### THE MAJOR ON THE WHITE HORSE.

General Gordon was obliged to bring our interview to a close in order to keep an engagement elsewhere, and again to my surprise Mr. Grady lingered and pressed me for further details of the battle around Fort Haskell. He said that in concert with General Gordon he had used every effort to find living participants among the veterans of the south who had taken part in the struggle around that fort, but that it appeared that none had survived the stirring campaign of which the Fort Steadman sortie was the opening.



"HERE, YET, TRY YOUR HAND."

ing battle, Five Forks the pivotal one and Appomattox the sequel. His interest in the affair was so keen that at first I concluded that it was the only battle he knew much about, even at second-hand, and that he was something of an enthusiast, not to say a "crank," upon that subject. He had upon his tongue and the full particulars of the storming and capture of Fort Steadman and the batteries, and found in me a most attentive listener. But I was able to surprise him, just as I had surprised General Gordon, by an incident of the attack upon Fort Haskell. I said to him that there was one hero among Gordon's men who deserved a monument for his gallantry that morning, and that it would give me great pleasure to take part in erecting one as a tribute to American valor. "I mean the rider of the white horse," said I, looking at Mr. Grady calmly in the face, puzzled to note that I touched upon something wholly new to him, for the coming of the white horse on that day was among the most vivid recollections of myself and my comrades. It seemed strange to me that a southerner as well informed as Mr. Grady had proved to be upon that picturesque battle should not catch at once upon this reference. I felt at the outset that it was like carrying coals to Newcastle to pour into the ears of a southerner an account of a deed of southern heroism upon the battlefield, the bravest I had ever seen, and I supposed one of the best known in the country's annals. But Mr. Grady's interest increased as I proceeded, and I told the story as though I was the sole witness. "I mean that major who rode a white horse back and forth between the lines after daylight, when

bullets and shells were flying like hail, and finally led a small forlorn hope to silence our fort and save a line of retreat for those of Gordon's soldiers who had survived the battle and given it up as hopeless." Mr. Grady heard this recital with unfeigned eagerness, and I continued: "You already know from what General Gordon said here to me, and has explained to you before, that on that eventful morning a couple of hours after daylight, he saw a vast federal army drawn up around the breach he had made under cover of night, and his little force hemmed in by a murderous fire from the right, left and front. To advance was impossible. To retreat, even over the 60 rods of space that intervened between Fort Steadman, where his men lay and their own works, must cost him at least the half of his surviving battalions.

"There was only one gun in Fort Haskell bearing upon Fort Steadman, and that was in the center of the wall facing the high embankment and parapet of Fort Steadman, behind which the Confederates had taken shelter. So long as they remained there this gun could do them little harm, but when they attempted to get back to their own works they passed directly under the fire of a gun in the angle of our fort, which raked the ground ahead of them with spherical case, a terrible field glass at that range, almost as deadly as a canister. The Confederate sharpshooters back in their old lines kept up a fire upon the angle, hoping to silence that piece, but without effect. Our guns were German, and the chief of artillery of our brigade, a German major, stood in the battery, field glass in hand, with head and shoulders above the parapet, and directed every discharge of the gun. My company was stationed around the angle, and after bringing savagely for some time the major suddenly told his gunners to cease, and called out to the riflemen who were nearest the embrasure, 'Shoot the man on the white horse!'

"I was summoned away at that time by duties elsewhere, but I returned a few moments afterward to find the piece again in action, the major at his post, and just as I reached the spot the sergeant of our company, crouching so as to keep his head below the parapet, moved back from the opening of the embrasure, and, handing me his rifle, said: 'Here, yet, try your hand. See if you can bring down that man on the white horse, and he'll be a marksmanship, and, seizing the rifle, advanced close to the embrasure, where I could take aim with my head somewhat lowered, and not be harmed by the flash of the cannon-barking at my elbow. A hasty glance at the ground in front of Fort Steadman showed me that there was a stream of Confederate soldiers in very much of a rout pouring out of the captured fort back to their own lines, and that the shots from the gun by which I stood poised through the mass with fearful effect. A man on a white horse, with his face turned toward Fort Steadman, was trying to urge and guide the frantic steed toward that fort. Behind him were 20 or 30 soldiers in gray, struggling along the while horse was plunging and leaping so wildly that I found it impossible to draw a bead upon him across the rifle barrel, moving the muzzle to cover him as he moved. The smoke from the gun beside me occasionally cut off my vision, but I was not long in discovering the true situation. The man on the white horse had brought up from the old Confederate lines a handful of daring men, to charge upon the battery which was slaughtering his retreating comrades, in the hope of saving the many by sacrificing the few. I had heard of that white horseman several times in the course of the morning. He had been seen again and again galloping back and forth over the narrow field which was the scene of this strange combat. For all that we read of daring deeds in war, such incidents are few and far between, at least I had my experience during three years' service in the army of the Potomac. I had heard of such things in thrilling accounts of older wars, but had come

to the conclusion that they were imaginary pictures. To have such a spectacle under my own eyes, and almost at the end of my rifle barrel, was something startling.

### "TO BRAVE TO DIE SO."

"I fully intended to shoot the hero, and was waiting for the best chance, so as to be sure not to throw away a shot, but as I waited he moved on out of range of the cannon fire—his man around him in solid and defiant phalanx—caused for an instant, then faced his steed toward us as though to advance and strike our wall with the flank of the battery, thus avoiding its fire. While my eye was still upon him, he pointed with his sword toward the murderous cannon, which just at that instant sent another shot crashing through the ranks of the retreating men in gray. His horse arose majestically upon his hind feet, and for a moment there was a mortal equestrian statue carved out against



HIS HORSE AROSE MAJESTICALLY.

the background of battle smoke, bristling parapets and indistinct masses of warring men. I was charmed by the sight, yet carried away by my admiration for the hero who was the central figure of it all. I lowered my piece, discharged it at random and crawled back from the embrasure, to be met by the sergeant's eager cry, 'Did you fetch him?' 'No,' said I, 'he is too brave to die so.' Whether or not it occurred to me at the time, I have since thought that I must have had a feeling that it would be injurious to snuff out that flame of peerless courage with a pitiful pellet of lead.

"The sergeant gave me a look of mingled pity and contempt. He had tried his own hand and sent several of his best shots, one after the other, to the embrasure to try to bring down the man on the white horse, and of course he felt chagrined to be obliged to confess to the gallant artillerymen who were so valiantly fighting that gun that he had no marksmen equal to the emergency. However, the incident was soon forgotten, for we had a hot time in repelling the charge led by the man on the white horse and in repelling the damage caused by a three-fold poured into our corner from the old Confederate

lines. The sergeant himself was terribly wounded a few moments afterward, and from that time on to the end he had no thought but for his own miseries. In looking over the parapet to keep the run of the fight, which was of course very brief, I caught one or two glimpses of the man on the white horse riding through the storm of bullets which greeted his advance. Soon all was over, and our men were sending up cheers of victory. Repelling with the rest, I forgot all about the rider of the white horse until I heard some of the men discussing the particulars of his death. When we went outside of the walls to examine the battlefield, we found the body of an officer wearing the insignia of a major, lying within 20 feet of our parapet, with his head toward our wall, his sword firmly held in a death grip and, lying toward the gun which he had saved his life and that of many by, seen in silence. He had been shot from the

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NEXT SUNDAY  
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